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GENESIS 4

Series: Understanding Your Roots

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[PRAYER] ...and with his wife Deborah there, we ask, Lord, that you'd bless them today. Lord, for each one of us. We have our needs as we come before you and we ask, Lord, that you'd teach us how to lay them down at your feet and to trust you for today's breath, for today's life, for today's experiences that we'd be able to enjoy you in everything that we do. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well let's pick up the story where we left off last week because as we were looking at our story last week we talked about Adam and Eve and how they sinned. So we left off with the consequences of their sin. We talked about the curse that God proclaims on each of them and we learned some things from that and the consequences. But there's another verse that we didn't look at that I wanted to look at. It's the one in Genesis 3:24. Beth reminded me about this verse and I realized how important it is. We don't want to leave this verse. So one of the consequences is mentioned here. Let me read it to you.

It says in Genesis 3:24 – *He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.* This tree of life is an interesting tree. It seems that this tree you could go to it and eat and if you kept eating from this tree you would live forever. So God knows in His mercy that sin does not match with eternal life. You can't have sin and eternal life. That just is not a good match. So those two don't go together. So God sets this angel up to guard the tree so that they could not participate in it because now they had sinned and they had this sin nature.

Sin and eternal life don't go together and we know that God had a different plan in mind. A plan of redemption that we celebrated today. It's a plan of Jesus Christ's death on the cross. That we look back on that experience, that crucifixion of Jesus Christ and we see that God conquered the penalty of sin in that experience and gave us eternal life. John 3:16 says – *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but will have eternal life.* In fact the whole gospel of John is about this statement about life that we can experience in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan woman in John 4, He says – *I will give you living water. This is water that you will never thirst again.* And He's not just talking about physical thirst. He's talking about this something deep inside of you, this eternal life that you'll experience. After Jesus fed the five thousand, He says as He's teaching the people – *I am the*

bread of life. Jesus is life. That's the whole point there. In the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead in John 11, He says – *I am the resurrection and the life.* The whole book of John was written... In John 20:30-31 he says – I have written this book. Now he says I didn't put in here all of the things that Jesus did, but I've included the things that will help you to see that Jesus is the Messiah and that when you believe in Him, you will have eternal life.

So we need to recognize that God has dealt with the sin problem and He's provided us with eternal life. The key is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. As we celebrated today in communion we look back on that event.

But what about Adam and Eve and those people back there? What are they doing in reference to this whole challenge? They don't have the Garden of Eden. They don't have this tree of life anymore. But we go back to verse 15 in Genesis 3 because God made a promise. And the promise that He made is – *I will put enmity between you and the woman (speaking to the serpent), and between your offspring and her offspring; and he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* It's a reference to the crucifixion that is yet to come. But they don't know the details. They don't know what's going to happen. They have a promise looking forward. We look back on the event. But we're looking at the same event. And as the Old Testament unfolds, we see more and more clues given about who this is. What Jesus Christ is going to be, His death, and we're taught more about the suffering servant and He's going to be born of a virgin. All of those clues come to bear in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's just important to note that.

It's important for this reason. Important because if you look at this particular verse, He says the solution is going to come through the offspring. You have to imagine Eve saying, "Oh good. Offspring. We better have a baby." So that brings us into chapter 4 because I'm sure Eve thought that it was going to be the baby that she gave birth to that was going to be this one who was going to crush the serpent's heel. In fact I think every young Jewish girl as she's growing up would ask the question – Am I going to be the one to give birth the Messiah? The promise will be fulfilled through me?

It says in chapter 4:1 – *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.*

There are a lot of things that these two boys have in common. They both grew up in the same home and same family of parents who knew God, who I'm sure told stories about how they walked with God in the evening and how God had worked in their lives. These two boys grew up in the same home. They probably had pets that ran around the yard. They probably had their own parcels of land that they would take care of and dig up. Maybe their family went on picnics. Maybe they took a picnic walk out to the garden where they saw the angel there guarding the tree of life. These two boys both had a work ethic. They worked hard. In fact maybe because of the animals they had around and the land they took care of is because they developed these different occupations. But they had a work ethic where they were doing what they felt like they wanted to do and it was part of their job.

Notice that Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain was a worker of the ground. I'm sure they came home at night and told stories about their work and what they did at work. I mean they were a family and they were learning about how to live and how to be and what it looked like. And they must have learned some things about God. In fact apparently God spoke to them directly in those times because when Cain was approached by God or God spoke to Cain, it wasn't a surprise like oh wow, somebody's talking to me. There was this interaction, this understanding of who God is. And when they understood that, they knew that coming to God in worship was a way to connect to Him.

So we read in the next verses, in verses 3-5 it says – *In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*

There are two different sacrifices, offerings that are brought to God. Cain brings some vegetables – maybe some potatoes and tomatoes and Brussel sprouts or whatever. And Abel brings a lamb. Now some people look at these two sacrifices and they draw attention to the quality of them. That maybe Cain's sacrifice in part was it was just like he brought some produce from the land and maybe for him that wasn't as valuable as this lamb that as the first and the best – the firstborn lamb. This was this special lamb that Abel took care of. Maybe there's a difference in quality of the sacrifices. That's a possibility. And certainly there's application for us in our giving that we don't want to just bring God the leftovers. We want to bring something that is of value to us. We want to come before the Lord. When we give to the Lord, we give something that's a sacrifice. It's part of our heart. It's not just the leftovers.

I remember the story of David. That David said at one point he was given some land that he could make as part of a sacrifice to God and David's statement was this: *I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing.* Because David understood that there's a sacrifice involved in the worship process. If I'm going to worship the Lord, I want to give and I want to give in a way that demonstrates a sacrifice that I'm offering to the Lord.

But I think there's something more behind this and I'm going to share with you some other scriptures. This is about a dozen scriptures that reference the story of Cain and Abel that lead me to believe there's something going on that's deeper. Just look in the verses right here. It says when God was evaluating these – *And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering.* So it's not just the offering. It's Abel and the offering, and Cain and the offering. He doesn't regard Cain's offering. Why is that? Well if we look in Hebrews 11 it says that Abel offered his offering in faith. That's a statement made about him. What is it that he's doing? He's offering this sacrifice in faith. Maybe that's making a statement of who Abel was in bringing his heart to the Lord. Maybe he's coming with his heart right before the Lord.

Well what about Cain? Let me show you a verse in 1 John about Cain. 1 John 3:11-12 as John sat probably with Jesus. We know he did sit with Jesus, but maybe he asked Jesus questions about tell us, what happened at the beginning of the world? And maybe Jesus told him this, and that's where he got this information. But here's John speaking about Cain. He says this: *For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. We should not be like*

Cain, who is of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. So there's this statement being made here in 1 John that gives us maybe a little more indication. We don't have a lot told to us in the story of Genesis 4, but maybe Cain had this heart that wasn't coming to the Lord in the right way.

So the Bible says that God didn't regard Cain or his sacrifice that he brought. Now some people say, "Well you know if God's going to hold them accountable about what kind of sacrifice to bring, then He must have given them instructions in advance about what kind of sacrifices." And maybe He did that. But I don't think that's required because one of the ways we learn in life is when we make mistakes. It's very possible that these guys brought sacrifices and God says to Cain, "Cain, that's the wrong sacrifice." And you learn through experience. We all do that.

This is going to lead us to three different lessons that I want to point out here that we learn from this story about Cain and mistakes that he made. If you're a young person listening to this story, you've probably heard this story of Cain and Abel. It's a sad story, but I want to take you into it a little more detail because I want you to understand what's taking place in this story and the lessons that we can learn from it.

The first one of I want to point out is that Cain did not respond well to correction. We want to value correction. Lesson number one: Value correction. You see God first of all corrects Cain and says, "That sacrifice is the wrong one to bring to me." Now I think we learn things from mistakes that we make. We learn them in all kinds of different ways. If you're riding a skateboard or you're riding a bike and no hands and showing off and crash, you learn from your mistake (hopefully). You don't try that one again. We learn from mistakes. We also learn from correction of other people. Sometimes your parents correct you. Sometimes your brother or sister correct you. Sometimes someone else corrects you. In fact you can learn things in all kinds of different ways. You can learn something from a teacher, you can learn something from a parent, you can learn something from Google or from YouTube. But one of the ways that God has designed for us to learn is from correction.

The key is how do we respond to correction? Cain did not respond to correction well when his sacrifice wasn't accepted and he didn't respond well to the correction when God tries to correct him about his anger. Cain does not handle correction well. We need to learn how to handle correction well. I think in many people there's this kind of tendency to defend themselves or to do what Adam and Eve did. Remember, they blamed the problem on other people or hid themselves. Cain is going to do some similar things. He gets himself into trouble in the midst of this whole thing. One of the things he doesn't do is value correction. Lesson number one is to value correction. We have to learn how to do it because it's one of the ways that God teaches us things. We learn faster.

In Proverbs 6:23 it says these words: *The corrections of discipline are the way to life.* You remember we talked about last week quality of life and how Proverbs most of the time is talking about a quality of life? That's what it's talking about in that verse. The corrections of discipline are the way to life. Your quality of life will increase if you learn how to receive correction or if you are corrected. We want to be the kind of people that receive correction well. Very important to be able to do that.

I love to tell kids the story or the Bible verse in Proverbs 12:1 because he uses a word that we don't use in our family (the word 'stupid'). It says in Proverbs 12:1 – *He who loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.* Now why does the Bible say that? Sometimes children will say because well when you're doing the wrong thing and you don't respond to correction, you look stupid. I think that's a great answer if we don't respond well.

One mom took a piece of toilet paper about 4-feet long and tied it to the back of her shirt and then came back out into the life. She did it because her ten-year-old daughter was continually looking for ways to get out of trouble. Would never take responsibility for herself. Was always somebody else's fault, she blamed somebody else, always defending herself, justifying. So Mom decided to use this as an example. So she tied this toilet paper on the back of her shirt and then she went out and just walked around, walked through the living room where her daughter was.

Her daughter says, "Mom, you've got toilet paper on your shirt."

Mom says, "No, I don't. Quit telling me about something I did wrong. I didn't do anything wrong. There's nothing wrong with my shirt." And she keeps going around.

"Mom, there's toilet paper on the back of your shirt."

"No, there isn't. You're always picking on me. It's not my fault. It's not my problem. I don't have any toilet paper on my shirt."

So the girl starts running after mom and they're running around the house till finally the daughter catches up to her mom and pulls off the toilet paper. And then mom used that as an example to talk about the value of correction. That *he who hates correction is stupid.* Why? Because that person doesn't learn, doesn't grow.

This is not just a young person problem, is it? There's a lot of adults we know who have a hard time when they're corrected. It's always somebody else's fault. They blame somebody else for the problem. We need to be able to respond well to correction. It's one of the ways that God designed for us to learn.

That's what's taught in this first lesson of Cain that we must learn is to value correction. He didn't do that and notice what happens in this verse. It says – *So Cain was very angry and his face fell.* He was angry. He didn't respond well to the correction.

I want to take you to verse 8. I'm going to jump ahead to verse 8 because I want to look at the second error that Cain made that we can learn from. It's comparison. I want you to see that Cain had a problem with God. The problem was God did not accept his sacrifice. That's where the problem was. It was between Cain and God, but then what Cain does is he turns it into a problem with his brother. He's mad at God, so he's going to take it out on his brother. He's going to compare himself to his brother and so on.

It says – *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.* Why did he do that? Because he was comparing himself to his brother. "I'm taller than somebody else is", as Brandon likes to do. Kids identify themselves by comparing themselves to others. "I can run faster than Billy." "I started to read faster than

Johnny.” They start telling themselves that they are better and they identify their identity based on comparison. It is a dangerous thing. Because as soon as you start comparing to someone else, you say those dangerous words – “that’s not fair.” So when you start saying “that’s not fair” and you live with that as you look at other people, you start becoming more angry and the anger increase.

That’s what happens in this passage. It’s not fair. He got something I didn’t get. See, Cain had a problem and that problem was with God. That’s where the problem was. And all Cain needed to do was make that change. If he would make the change then he would be fine, but instead he goes and compares himself to other people. You know some children get so into this comparison thing. It’s like they get a cupcake and they want to compare with their brother’s cupcake to see who got the most sprinkles on the cupcake. I mean it gets to be absurd when children start comparing one with another. Don’t get caught up in the comparison.

God doesn’t treat us all the same. Some He gives five talents, some He gives two talents, some He gives one talent. There’s no discussion there about fairness. That’s just how God or the landowner gave out the talents in the story. When God gives spiritual gifts out, He doesn’t give everybody the same one. He gives spiritual gifts according to the person’s faith. Each person is treated uniquely and special in God’s eyes. That’s much more than treating equally. Treated uniquely and special. What a privilege.

At the end of the gospel of John there’s this great story where Jesus is telling Peter, “Peter this is how you’re going to die.” And Peter points at John and says, “What about him?” It’s this comparison thing. What about him? And Jesus is brilliant in what He says. Jesus says to Peter – “*What is it to you if I let him remain until I come again?*” In other words, what Jesus is saying to Peter is mind your own business. You work on your relationship with me. Don’t worry about anybody else.

In Hebrews 12 it says we’re in a race. You and I are in a race. But not with each other. It says – *Since we’re surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses, let us run the race with our eyes fixed on Jesus.* That is so big. Not fixed on the other people around us. “I’m running faster than you” or “I’m better than you.” Our eyes are fixed on Jesus. That’s where we’re going. Don’t get caught up in comparison. You are in a relationship with God and that’s what’s important. You can’t be making these big statements about “that’s not fair. God did that with that person, He didn’t do this with me.” That was Cain’s error. Cain made a significant mistake and it cost him. Because when that starts happening, you start saying “that’s not fair,” you start comparing yourself to others, you get angry. And that becomes the third lesson. So let’s go back and look at how God as the counselor steps in.

If you’re a counselor, this is a great model for counseling as you step in and try to help a person change. Or you’re a parent or you’re a teacher. You come in and God says this: *The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?”* First of all God is saying I can tell that you’re angry just by looking at you. It’s changed your countenance. But He is also asking questions. We learned last week that God asks questions, not because He doesn’t know because He’s trying to find out information; God asks questions to encourage us to do self-reflection.

“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” If you do well, will you not be accepted? In other words let’s go back here. Cain, if you just would change and bring the right sacrifice, you would be fine. We’re okay here. All you need to do is do the right thing. You need to come with the right heart, bring the right sacrifices, and everything will be fine. God is trying to correct him in the midst of this. He’s saying to him, “You don’t compare yourself to your brother. Just look at yourself. Do well yourself and you will be accepted. It’s about your relationship with me, not about your relationship with other people.” Really important.

Kelly Fox I know is online. She is in our group on Wednesday night. She was sharing in our group on Wednesday night where we kind of think about the sermon coming forward and think about some ideas about it. As we were talking, Kelly said, “This was such a valuable verse for me in my life. When I realized that I don’t have to prove myself to other people, but I can do well before God and He accepts me, it freed me from the ability to compete with other people. I don’t have to do that. I’m in my relationship with God. That’s what I want to do.”

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well...and this is where we have a problem with Cain. It’s really a problem that we can all experience in our lives if we’re not careful. It has this idea to do with anger. Because when you have an anger problem... See anger is not evil, anger is not bad, but it can open the door to bad. And that’s what it’s saying. It’s at the door. When you have a problem with anger, then sin is crouching at the door. So you’ve opened the door to your heart because of the anger and the sin wants to get in there in one way or another. So anger leads to all kinds of things. When you say “that’s not fair.” “It’s not fair that my employer does this. I’m just going to steal these things from my employer. He owes me that anyway.” “That’s not fair that that person does that, so I’m going to be mean to that person,” it opens the door to all kinds of sin in our lives.

So the third lesson is to be really careful with anger because anger is dangerous. It’s not evil, but it’s dangerous. So God says – *And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.*

In Ephesians 4, we have some advice about anger. It says – *In your anger do not sin.* Which further confirms the idea that anger is not sinful in and of itself. But the very next phrase says – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger.* Oh that’s good advice for any of us. Because it’s the harboring of anger, it’s the anger we have in our bed at night when we’re trying to go to sleep, but we can’t because we’re role playing this over and over again because we’re mad at whatever. And when that goes on and on, that’s opening the door to sin in our lives.

That’s why the very next phrase in Ephesians 4:27 says this: *and do not give the devil a foothold.* Satan wants to get a foothold in our lives and one of the ways he does that is through an anger problem. When our anger starts to increase and it gets to be a problem in our lives, we open the door for sin to creep in. It’s dangerous for us to allow anger to grow.

How do we deal with that? Well I think in part we follow the instructions of the counselor here. If you do well, won't you be accepted? Your relationship is with me; do the right thing. Cain did not. Cain ended up in trouble and we read in the next verse (that we already read) that he ended up killing his brother.

Now I want to read the rest of the passage to you, so bear with me and listen to the passage. Because I want you to hear life goes on. I want you to hear what happens in broken people's lives. Because you know broken people. Their lives are broken and disappointing. Cain is going to suffer in this particular situation and he's going to suffer in two ways. One is he's going to be lonely, and number two, he's going to be unproductive in his work. Two things and those are consequences of an anger problem. You're going to be lonely and you're going to be unproductive in your work. Listen as I read the rest of the passage.

Verse 9 – Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” And the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.” And anybody who has an anger problem, it weakens their productivity. That's exactly what's happening here. Further, *“you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”* You're going to be lonely. You're just not going to have the friends that you would have otherwise. If you have an anger problem, that's going to be one of the consequences in your life and in my life. We need to be careful. *Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden.”*

One of the consequences of an anger problem in a person's life is they have a hard time drawing close to the Lord. They know they should come close to the Lord, but because they're so angry they can't come to the Lord. It's dangerous. They lose so much. Life becomes an unhappy place. They lose friends and their relationship with God is hindered. Bad news. Any of us should take lessons from Cain and learn not to develop anger problems that get out of hand in our heart, no matter what happens in our lives.

Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

So obviously what takes place is Cain's sin, his poor response to correction, his comparison of others, and his anger problem not only ends up killing his brother, but it damages him and then all kinds of other people suffer as a result of this. He's broken.

Again, life goes on. Let me read to you the passage because lots more happen in this passage. I just want you to see, life is going on. More people are being born on the earth and brokenness is taking place. But I want you to see the last phrase of the chapter. That's why I want to read it all to you so you can just see the power of the last phrase here.

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. So we're getting to Lamech because we've got a problem with Lamech. Lamech has a story and we want to hear the story about Lamech.

And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. So society is developing with all its different compartments. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. So we're learning more about society and how it's developing. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold." Life is getting complex. Bad things are happening. Some people are doing good things, some people are doing bad things. Brokenness is taking place. Society is growing. We've got all kinds of things happening in our world.

Now we're back to Adam and Eve. Verse 25 – *And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth (it's a great name, Seth), for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. And here comes the phrase. I want you to catch this phrase at the end of the chapter. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.*

Interesting. Brokenness taking place, society growing, all kinds of interesting things happen. People are learning how to play instruments, people are living in tents and having animals. You've got all kinds of things happening in life. People are taking on occupations and getting busy with life. But the last phrase is so strategic because it says – *At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.* That's got to be the solution to all of these challenges. The brokenness that we see in our world, the corruption that we see, the problems that we experience regularly. You've got to know that the solution is to come to God and to seek His heart. To come to Him. It's in those days people began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Now in the next chapter, chapter 5, we're not going to do a study there. It's a genealogy. Kind of interesting to see it, but we're going to jump into chapter 6, which is the story of Noah. We're going to see what God does through that one man who's righteous. We'll pick that up next week. But I want you to see here that people began to call upon the name of the Lord. That's what we all need to do.

In fact Jesus, as He was laying this out on the Sermon on the Mount, He described things like worry. He described clothes and food and not having them and needing them and working to get them and worrying about that. He says – *Seek me first and all these things will be added to you. Seek first the kingdom of righteousness and all these things will be added to you.*

See, our joy is to come before the Lord, seek Him first, to choose Him. To make Him the most important thing. To call upon the name of the Lord. So even in the midst of the struggles,

whatever the struggles are we're facing, we can come before the Lord and call out, "Lord, I want you, I need you. You are my everything." It's because of God's grace that we don't have to deal with shame in our lives. It's because of God's grace that we're able to draw upon Him. God's grace means so much to us. There's this battle raging inside of us sometimes between comparing ourselves to others or not, or feeling shame because of the mistakes we've made. We need to have this response before God that we call upon the name of the Lord. It's the healing that we find in our relationship with God that provides us with the ability to move forward, to enjoy Him, and to experience Him in some powerful ways. It increases our quality of life and it produces something we need.

Learn from the three lessons that Cain should have learned from. Number one – he didn't respond well to correction. Number two – he compared himself to other people. And number three – he didn't manage his anger. We need to learn from that and do well in our own lives so we can avoid the same problems that Cain had. The problem wasn't the sacrifice that caused all the drama for Cain. It's the fact that he didn't respond well to correction. It was a problem that he started comparing himself and then developed this anger and didn't repent of that. When God tried to correct him of his anger, he did not respond. That's why he went out and did the wrong thing. We can make changes earlier on if we'll respond better to correction, not compare ourselves to others, deal with our anger. God wants to do a work in our own hearts so that we can experience what He has for us. Amen? Amen.

Well let's stand and worship the Lord together. Let's call upon His name together. We need Him. We need His power. We need His strength.